

PRESS RELEASE  
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CLEVELAND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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The Shingles vaccine (Zostavax) is now available at Cleveland County Health Department and the cost is \$160 per person. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending a single dose of shingles vaccine (Zostavax) for adults 60 years of age and older. The fee must be paid at the time of vaccination. Currently Medicare does not pay for the shingles vaccine through Medicare Part B carriers. Individuals that have Medicare Part D, the prescription drug plan, will need to notify their carrier and file themselves for possible reimbursement.

Shingles is caused by the Varicella Zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. Only someone who has had a case of chickenpox or has received the chickenpox vaccine can get shingles. The chickenpox virus stays in the body and can reappear many years later to cause shingles. Shingles is more common in people 50 and older but the vaccine has not been studied in individuals less than 60 years of age.

A person should NOT get the vaccine who:

- has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin or any other component of shingles vaccine.
- has severe allergies unless recommended by their physician to receive the vaccine.
- has a weakened immune system because of HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system.
- is receiving treatment with drugs that affect the immune system such as steroids.
- is receiving cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy.
- has a history of cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma.
- has active untreated tuberculosis.
- is pregnant or might be pregnant. An individual should not get pregnant for 3 months after getting the vaccine.
- has a fever of 101.3 degrees Fahrenheit or greater. An individual should wait until a later time when well.

Zostavax vaccine is approved by the FDA. Studies show that it can prevent shingles 50% of the time. The vaccine contains live but weakened varicella virus that could overwhelm the immune system especially if given to people who have health problems. The length of immunity is unknown since it is a new vaccine. Medicare and private insurers often base coverage decisions on counsel from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices at CDC. This committee is expected to make recommendations at the 2007 fall meeting. Please call Cleveland County Health Department at (704) 484-5100 if you have questions in regard to the Shingles vaccine.

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-shingles.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-shingles.pdf)